

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3971

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 VIENTIANE 3451

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNARC LA TH BM XC

SUBJECT: TRI COUNTRY NARCOTICS MEETING- APRIL 26-28, 1973

REF: VIENTIANE 3281

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF REPORT ON TRI- COUNTRY ANTI-NARCOTICS MEETING HELD IN VIENTIANE 26-28 APRIL , IN WHICH AMEMBASSIES BANGKOK, RANGOON AND VIENTIANE CONCUR. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO RETRANSMIT THIS MESSAGE TO OTHER POSTS AS APPROPRIATE.

BEGIN SUMMARY: REPRESENTATIVES OF AMERICAN MISSIONS IN THAILAND, BURMA AND LAOS MET IN VIENTIANE 26-28 APRIL TO DISCUSS STATUS OF NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORTS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE COUNTRIES. CONFEREES UNDERSCORED THE CLOSE INTERRELATIONSHIP WHICH EXISTS BETWEEN ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS ON ONE SIDE, AND AGRICULTURAL REDIRECTION, ADDICT REHABILITA-
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TION, ETC., PROGRAMS ON THE OTHER. FOLLOWING IS REPORT ON TRI- COUNTRY DELIBERATIONS, INCLUDING COUNTRY STATUS REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. CONFERENCE ATMOSPHERICS- MEETING WAS MARKED BY SEVERAL INNOVATIONS, INCLUDING THE PARTICIPATION OF HOST COUNTRY OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING AND EXECUTING ANTI- DRUG PROGRAMS IN LAOS, AND A FIELD TRIP TO THE BAN HOUEI SAI AND LUANG PRABANG AREAS TO VIEW USAID- SUPPORTED AGRICULTURAL REDIRECTION PROJECTS FOR POPPY- PRODUCING HILLTRIBE PEOPLE IN NORTHERN LAOS. PARTICIPANTS ALSO VISITED THE US- BACKED RLG NARCTOCIS DETOXIFICATION AND REHABILITATION CENTER IN VIENTIANE. IN VIEW OF RECENT VISIT OF HONG KONG NARCOTICS COMMISSIONER NORMAN ROLPH TO SOUTHEAST ASIA AND APPARENT GROWING UK INTEREST IN INTERNATIONAL DRUG PROBLEM, LOCAL BRITISH EMBASSY REP WAS INVITED AND DID, IN FACT, ACCOMPANY CONFEREES ON FIELD TRIP UP- COUNTRY.

2. COUNTRY SITUATION REPORTS

A. LAOS

(1) LAO ASSESSMENT: BRIEFINGS BY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE GROUPE SPECIAL D' INVESTIGATION, BGEN KHAMMOU BOUSSARATH; DIRECTOR OF LAO CUSTOMS, BOUN NHOU NANTHATHANNIKO; AND CHIEF OF NARCOTICS BUREAU OF LAO NATIONAL POLICE, BOUNMY RENGMANIVONG, ALL STRESSED IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED U. S. ASSISTANCE TO RLG ANTI- NARCOTICS EFFORT. THEY CITED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, HIGHER PRIORITY WHICH RLG MUST NECESSARILY ASCRIBE TO NATIONAL DEFENSE, RECONSTRUCTION, REFUGEE RELIEF, ETC. KHAMHOU STRESSED THAT LAO ANTI- NARCOTICS LAW REMAINS UNPOPULAR AND THAT IT WAS ONLY AT SOUVANNA' S INSISTENCE-- AND ADMITTEDLY UNDER SOME PRESSURE FROM USG-- THAT LAW WAS PASSED IN FIRST PLACE. LAO OFFICIALS GENERALLY EXPRESSED VIEW THAT PASSAGE OF LAW HAD SERIOUSLY AFFECTED LAO REVENUES. BOUN NHOU NOTED THAT OPIUM IN THE PRE-1971 ERA HAD BEEN

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" THE ECONOMIC BASE OF LAOS." (FYI WE CONSIDER THIS STATEMENT AS ONE FOR " EFFECT" WITH UNDERLYING PURPOSE OF STRESSING NEED FOR HEAVY AND CONTINUED U. S. ASSISTANCE. END FYI.) BOUNMY PROVIDED CANDID ASSESSMENT OF PRESENT DRUG PROBLEM IN LAOS, ESTIMATING THAT THERE ARE AS MANY AS 30,000 DRUG ADDICTS NATIONWIDE AND THAT

USE OF " KAY" (NUMBER THREE HEROIN) IS GROWING, ESPECIALLY IN THE URBAN AREAS. HE NOTED IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE TO ARREST ALL ADDICTS DUE TO LACK OF TREATMENT FACILITIES.

GENERAL IMPRESSION GAINED FROM THREE BRIEFINGS WAS THAT LAO AGENCIES ARE WILLING TO GET ON WITH WHAT IS UNPOPULAR AND COMPLEX JOB, BUT NEED CONTINUED USG ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE. ONE INDICATION OF RLG WILLINGNESS TO COOPERATE WAS CABINET DECISION ON 25 APRIL TO ACCEDE TO U, N, SINGLE CONVENTION ON NARCOTIC DRUGS THE DAY AFTER CHARGE DEAN SPOKE WITH SOUVANNA URGING RLG TO DO SO.

(2) U. S. ASSESSMENT: AS A RESULT OF AERIAL SURVEY RECENTLY COMPLETED IN NORTHERN LAOS, IT IS PRESENTLY ESTIMATED THAT LAOS PRODUCES ONLY SOME 20.3 METRIC TONS OF OPIUM A YEAR, AND HAS BECOME A NET IMPORTER OF OPIUM IN ORDER TO SATISFY NEEDS OF ITS ADDICT POPULATION. ALL U. S.

ENFORCEMENT AND INTELLIGENCE REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT AGREED THAT LAOS IS NOT PRODUCING NO. 4 HEROIN AND NO SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS OF NO. 4 ARE TRANSITING THE COUNTRY. THUS, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, LAOS IS NOT A LINK IN THE INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRADE.

IN SPITE OF THIS APPARENTLY ROSY ASSESSMENT, CONCERN WAS VOICED OVER WHAT AN END TO FIGHTING IN LAOS AND THE FORMATION OF A COALITION GOVERNMENT MIGHT MEAN FOR THE NARCOTICS CONTROL EFFORT. REAL PEACE WOULD PERMIT HILLTRIBE PEOPLE TO MOVE BACK TO THE HILLSIDES WHERE THEY FORMERLY LIVED AND GREW POPPIES . PEACE WOULD OPEN UP TRAFFICKING ROUTES-- ESPECIALLY ON THE
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GROUND-- WHICH HAVE BEEN CLOSED FOR YEARS. PEACE WOULD ALSO MEAN LESS MONEY AND FEWER JOBS FOR VARIOUS PEOPLE WHO MIGHT THEN GRAVITATE TOWARD DRUG TRAFFICKING TO MAKE ENDS MEET. MOREOVER, A COALITION GOVT, WITH PATHET LAO (LPF) PARTICIPATION, WOULD MOST LIKELY BE FAR LESS WILLING THAN THE PRESENT RLG TO ACCEPT THE PRESENCE OF U . S. NARCOTICS ADVISORS IN VARIOUS TOWNS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE . HOWEVER, GENERAL KHAMMOU FELT THAT GSI, AS PART OF PRIMIN' S OFFICE, WOULD CERTAINLY CONTINUE TO FUNCTION MUCH AS AT PRESENT, THE PATHET LAO ATTITUDE MAY WELL BE AMBIVALENT: ON THE ONE HAND, THEY WOULD OPPOSE INVOLVEMENT OF U. S. NARCOTICS

ENFORCEMENT ADVISORS, ON THE OTHER, THEY PROBABLY WOULD ENDORSE GENERAL REPRESSION OF NARCOTICS TRAFFICE.

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IN SUM, CONFEREES AGREED THAT THE NARCOTICS CONTROL PROGRAM IN LAOS HAS ACHIEVED, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, ITS MAJOR GOAL OF REMOVING LAOS AS A SOURCE OF HEROIN FLOWING INTO THE INTERNATIONAL MARKET. BUT THEY ALSO AGREED THAT COMPLACENCY SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO SET IN, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF THE UNCERTAIN POLITICAL SITUATION WHICH LIES AHEAD. NARCOTICS ATTACHE MORELLI NOTED THAT, IF PRESENT U. S. SUPPORT FOR RLG ANTI-NARCOTICS ACTIVITIES WAS STOPPED, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT, IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE, FOR THE LAO TO CONTINUE TO IMPLEMENT AN EFFECTIVE ANTI-NARCOTICS PROGRAM.

B. THAILAND

THAI LEADERSHIP IS ENVINCING INCREASING CONCERN OVER EXTREMELY SERIOUS ADDICTION PROBLEM FACING THAILAND. THAI PRESS CONTINUES TO GIVE HEAVY

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COVERAGE TO THE PROBLEM, ESPECIALLY IN URBAN AREAS, CONTRIBUTING TO HEIGHTENED GOVT AND PUBLIC INTEREST IN ALL ASPECTS OF PROBLEM. ENFORCEMENT HAS PRINCIPALLY BENEFITTED FROM THE NEW THAI ATTITUDE. THAI POLICE UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP HAVE UNDERTAKEN A SIGNIFICANT INTERNAL REORGANIZATION TO BRING ABOUT GREATER COORDINATION AND PARTICIPATION IN NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES BY ALL TNPD UNITS. COMMANDERS OF ALL UNITS INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS NOW SIT ON A CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND REPORT TO NEWLY- CREATED NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION CENTER. REORGANIZATION CAME AT THAI INITIATIVE, AS HAVE A NUMBER OF CASES AND SEIZURES SINCE MID-DECEMBER 1972.

SEIZURE STATISTICS SINCE JUNE 1972 ARE IMPRESSIVE. THAIS HAVE MADE SEIZURES OF APPROX 15 METRIC TONS (OPIUM EQUIVALENT) OF ALL TYPES OF OPIATES. RECENT TRAWLER SEIZURE OFF VIETNAM COAST AND THAI PARTICIPATION IN THE INVESTIGATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM SHOULD LEAD TO EXTENDED THAI POLICE INVESTIGATIONS INTO TRAWLER TRAFFIC, INCLUDING THE SYSTEM BEHIND IT. BNDD/ BANGKOK IS ACTIVELY WORKING WITH RTG TO DEVELOP ELITE MARINE POLICE UNIT DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THAI CAPABILITY TO INTERDICT TRAWLER TRAFFIC IN OR NEAR THAI WATERS; ALSO WORTH NOTING IS RECENT SENTENCING OF POLICE COLONEL PRAMUAN VANNIKAPHAN TO 25 YEARS IN PRISON. PRAMUAN WAS FOUND GUILTY OF EXTORTION AND PROTECTING TRAFFICKERS.

ON INCOME SUBSTITUTION SIDE, SITUATION ALSO IMPROVING, THOUGH PROGRESS REMAINS SLOW. UNFDAC PROJECT HAS FINALLY BEGUN FIELD OPERATIONS. USDA HAS RECENTLY ASSIGNED A FIELD REPRESENTATIVE TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN CHIANG MAI ON HIGH ALTITUDE CROP SUBSTITUTES. CONFEREES EXPRESSED HOPE THAT URGENTLY- NEEDED RESEARCH ACTIVITIES CAN BE EXPANDED GREATLY IN NEAR FUTURE THROUGH ESTABLISHMENT OF A NORTHERN AGRICULTURE RESEARCH CENTER IN COOPERATION WITH MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE.

THAI PUBLIC WELFARE DEPARTMENT IS MOVING AHEAD WITH PILOT PROJECTS IN CONNECTION WITH ITS ZONAL DEVELOPMENT
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MENT PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT AND PROTECTION OF WATERSHED AREAS IN THE NORTH, A VIABLE LONG- TERM PROJECT THAT WILL PROVIDE SIGNIFICANT ALTERNATIVES FOR OPIUM- PRODUCING

HILLTRIBES AND, AT THE SAME TIME, CONTRIBUTE TO PRESERVATION OF THE WATERSHED OF THE CHAO PHYA RIVER, ON WHICH THAILAND'S RICE PRODUCTION IS ALMOST WHOLLY DEPENDENT. MOREOVER, A WHO/ UNFDAC/ REHABILITATION AND TREATMENT PROJECT FOR THAILAND IS EXPECTED TO BE SIGNED SHORTLY, PENDING RESOLUTION OF MINOR BUDGETARY REVISION.

TRAFFICKING BY BURMESE DISSIDENT ELEMENTS IN THAILAND REMAINS A MAJOR PROBLEM. AMBASSADOR UNGER HAS STRESSED THIS POINT IN SEVERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH GENERAL PRAPHAT, AND THE MISSION IS CONTINUING ITS PROGRAM TO KEEP PRAPHAT INFORMED ON THIS AND OTHER TRAFFIC. A HOPEFUL SIGN IN RECENT MONTHS IS THE INCREASED COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE GUB AND RTG, INCLUDING EXCHANGE VISITS BY THE THAI DEPUTY FONMIN AND THE GUB FONMIN, TO DISCUSS MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST, INCLUDING THE BURMESE DISSIDENT SITUATION. HOPEFULLY THIS WILL LEAD TO INCREASED UNDERSTANDING ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER AND PROVIDE A BASIS FOR FUTURE COOPERATION ON NARCOTICS MATTERS. A KEY ELEMENT IN BRINGING THIS ABOUT IS, QUITE OBVIOUSLY, SOME THAI ACTION ON THE U NU QUESTION SATISFACTORY TO THE GUB.

C. BURMA

SINCE LAST TRI- COUNTRY MEETING, THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING:

(1) DURING AMBASSADOR GODLEY'S CALL ON BURMESE FOREIGN MINISTER IN EARLY APRIL, LATTER IMPLIED POSSIBILITY OF RENEWED GUB INTEREST AT SOME POINT IN NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION EQUIPMENT PROVIDED " NO STRINGS ATTACHED."

(2) GUB IS MOVING AHEAD WITH EFFORTS TO INTEGRATE KEY IRREGULARS INTO REGULAR ARMED FORCES, WITH OUTCOME AS YET UNCERTAIN.

(3) PEKING- SUPPORTED BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY (WHITE FLAG) FORCES THREATEN FURTHER ADVANCES IN NORTHEAST BURMA
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WITH UNCLEAR EFFECTS ON OPIUM PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING IN AREAS UNDER THEIR CONTROL.

(4) UN NARCOTICS PROJECT PREPARATION MISSION, HEADED BY MARTENS, VISITED RANGOON IN JANUARY, WITH FIVE- MILLION- DOLLAR, FIVE- YEAR PROGRAM NOW BEING DRAWN UP FOR GUB.

(5) ENCOURAGING TREND TOWARD THAI- BURMESE RAPPROACHMENT, WITH EARLY VISIT BY NE WIN TO BANGKOK PROJECTED, OFFERING PROSPECT OF DEFUSING U NU AND OTHER PROBLEMS WHICH PRESENTLY HINDERING GUB/ RTG COOPERATION ON

NARCOTICS MATTERS.

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BNDD-05 IO-12 JUSE-00 SNM-02 SY-10 TRSE-00 SCI-06

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(6) BURMESE PRESS HAS INCREASED TONE OF URGENCY RE
NARCOTICS MENACE IN BURMA PROPER (LOWLAND AREAS INHABITED
BY ETHNIC BURMESE), NOTING FIRST REPORTED DEATH DUE TO
HEROIN, INCREASING DRUG SEIZURES AND ARRESTS, GUB-
SPONSORED STUDENT DEMONSTRATION AGAINST DRUG ABUSE, AND
NEED FOR INCREASED CONTROLS ON ACETIC ANHYDRIDE.

(7) GUB APPEARS INCREASINGLY MORE DISPOSED TOWARD
REGIONAL COOPERATION IN OTHER SPHERES, WITH IMPLICATION
THAT THEY MAY BE MORE WILLING TO COOPERATE IN INTER-
NATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL MEASURES. IN FIRST FOUR MONTHS
THIS YEAR, GUB HAS TAKEN FOLLOWING UNPRECEDENTED STEPS:

-- ISSUED 26 JANUARY STATEMENT CALLING FOR
REGIONAL CONFERENCE TO ESTABLISH DURABLE
POST- VIETNAM PEACE IN SEA;

-- APPLIED FOR MEMBERSHIP IN ASIAN DEVELOPMENT
BANK;

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-- OPENED UP BURMESE OFF- SHORE OIL EXPLORATION
TO U. S., JAPANESE AND GERMAN PARTICIPATION;
AND

-- MOVED TOWARD RECONCILIATION WITH THAILAND.
(8) GUB NON- PARTICIPATION IN ASEAN MEETING WAS
A MINUS, BUT UNDERSTANDABLE GIVEN UNRESOLVED
MILITARY SITUATION IN INDOCHINA.
IN SUMMARY, USUAL ZIG- ZAG PATTERN IN GUB ATTITUDES CONTINUED
BUT WITH FAR MORE PLUSES THAN MINUES IN RECENT MONTHS.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS OF CONFEREES:

A. WASHINGTON SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE AS RESPONSIVE AS
POSSIBLE TO ANY REQUESTS FOR NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION EQUIP-
MENT, ESPECIALLY IF BURMA SHOULD MAKE SUCH A REQUEST TO
USG, U . N. OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS.

B. NEXT REGIONAL MEETING IN BANGKOK
SHOULD INVITE REPRESENTATIVES FROM U. S. CONSULATE GENERAL
IN HONG KONG. AMONG OTHER TOPICS, CONFEREES SHOULD FOCUS
ON POSSIBLE METHODS OF INTERDICTION OF CARAVANS MOVING FROM
BURMA TO AND ACROSS THAILAND/ LAO BORDERS, ADDITIONAL
STEPS WHICH CAN BE TAKEN TO CONTROL SHIPMENTS OF ACETIC
ANHYDRIDE INTO SOUTHEAST ASIA, AND THE PROBLEMS OF MARKET-
ING VARIOUS SUBSTITUTE CROPS BOTH INTERNALLY AND THROUGHOUT
THE REGION.

C. U. S. MISSIONS SHOULD CONTINUE TO FOSTER REGIONAL
COOPERATION, ESPECIALLY AT THIS JUNCTURE, COOPERATION BETWEEN
BURMA AND THAILAND. RLG/ GUB COOPERATION, DESPITE GUB REBUFF
OF RLG PROPOSAL FOR RECIPROCAL STATIONING OF CUSTOMS OFFICERS
ON EACH SIDE OF THE LAO/ BURMESE BORDER, SHOULD ALSO BE
ENCOURAGED.

D. IN VIEW OF SIMILARITY OF AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS
FACING REDIRECTION EFFORTS IN LAOS AND THAILAND,
COMMUNICATION BETWEEN U. S. ADVISERS OPERATING AT
TECHNICAL LEVELS ON BOTH SIDES OF MEKONG (AND WITH
REPRESENTATIVES OF U . N. AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANI-
ZATIONS WORKING IN SAME FIELD) SHOULD BE MAXIMIZED.

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E. HOST COUNTRY OFFICIALS IN THAILAND, LAOS AND
BURMA SHOULD BE BRIEFED ON THE TRI- COUNTRY MEETING.
MOREOVER, BRITISH EMBASSIES IN TRI- BORDER COUNTRIES
SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO SUPPORT THOSE ROLPH PROPOSALS
WHICH WE FAVOR, BUT TO SEE CLEARLY OUR REASONS FOR

OPPOSING HIS PRE- EMPTIVE BUYING CONCEPT (SEE REFTEL)

F. CONFEREES SUGGEST THAT, AS SOON AS U. S. LIAISON MISSION IN PEKING IS FUNCTIONING, OPPORTUNITIES TO INVOLVE PRC IN DISCUSSION OF DRUG SITUATION IN SEA SHOULD BE SOUGHT, NOTING THAT RUSSIANS ARE MAKING A GREAT DEAL OF PROPAGANDA ABOUT PRC BEING WORLD' S LARGEST DRUG PUSHER.

4. CONCLUSION:
CONFEREES REAFFIRMED THAT ENFORCEMENT AND INTELLIGENCE EFFORTS, AIMED AT CURTAILING THE FLOW OF ILLICIT NARCOTICS TO THE U. S., REMAIN THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF U. S. DRUG PROGRAMS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. CONFEREES ALSO TOOK NOTE OF THE NEED TO DEVOTE ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO ENTIRE RANGE OF SOCIAL/ ECONOMIC MEASURES WHICH ARE THE NECESSARY COUNTERPOINTS TO SUCCESSFUL ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS.
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